

chartered federally in 1941 by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Congress of the United States.

America was on the verge of world war, and the President knew it. We had fragmented volunteer organizations to serve our troops but no organization to really give them the services they needed. The Congress passed a resolution creating and chartering the USO, consolidating those organizations into one. Since that charter 75 years ago, that organization has served over 10 million American soldiers in uniform from the time they put it on until the time they take it off.

One need only go to their local airport, which, for me, is the Hartsfield International Airport in Atlanta. Last year 100 million passengers went through that airport. Many of them were soldiers, a lot of them on the way to deployment in Afghanistan or the Middle East. When they go through the Atlanta airport, the first thing they see is the USO booth, and the first thing they get is services from the USO to help them in their trip, their endeavors, and help them with their families. The USO provides invaluable help to the men and women who provide all of us the security we relish in this great Nation of ours called the United States of America.

On this 75th anniversary of the USO, I commend the volunteers—900 of them in Georgia—who provide services to 150,000 Georgia soldiers a year, for all they do on behalf of our country and on behalf of our services. The USO is a great organization for a great country, serving the greatest of all military in the United States of America and throughout the world.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I have two different amendments that are coming to the floor. One deals with the Energy bill. One of them deals with the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This bill does a permanent extension of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. My question on that has been this: The money that is being allocated for the Land and Water Conservation Fund to be able to purchase properties—are we also allocating money to be able to actually maintain those properties?

Currently, in the current existence of this bill, there is some money allocated to it in some future way, but I have a simple request: As much money as we

allocate to dealing with purchasing new properties, we should also focus in on maintaining what we already have because we have billions of dollars in maintenance backlog. Right now one of the worst conservation things that can happen in many parts of the country to land is actually put it into Federal trusts because it is not being taken care of once it actually goes into the Federal trust.

But that is not the prime issue I want to talk about right now. Oklahoma is truly an “all of the above” energy State. Oil, gas, coal, wind, geothermal, hydroelectric, solar—we actually use all of those platforms in a very diverse energy economy. A tremendous amount of wind energy is produced in Oklahoma, used in Oklahoma, and exported to other States around us. It is a very important energy source for us. It has been incredibly beneficial, and it is an important part of our portfolio of a diverse energy platform.

We have a challenge to deal with our tax policy. Just a few weeks ago, this Congress—the House and the Senate—passed a change in the way the wind production tax credit will be handled. As a quick review for this body, the wind production tax credit was put in place in 1992. It was a short-term tax credit to give a little bit of help to a brandnew wind energy and several other diverse energy portfolios, but it was especially targeted at wind to help a brandnew energy source get started.

Twenty-four years later, this temporary tax credit is still sitting there. As of a few weeks ago, it was changed. It was changed so that in 2015 and 2016 the full tax credit will still be there, but starting in 2017 that tax credit will drop to 80 percent of what it is now, in 2018 it will drop to 60 percent, in 2019 it will drop to 40 percent, and in 2020 it is left undefined.

I heard multiple individuals say this is a phaseout of the production tax credit—a phaseout. That is something many of us have pursued for many years—how do we get out of this perpetual cycle? The problem is it wasn't a phaseout, it was a phasedown of the production tax credit because in 2020 the PTC is left undefined. Most people would say that is not a problem. It will just go away. It is left undefined. The problem is 10 times in the past 24 years the production tax credit has been undefined for a future year assuming it would go to zero, and 10 times this Congress has gone back and retroactively put it back into place—10 times. So to say in 2020 we are going to leave it undefined and it will go away is not a true phaseout. That is a phasedown, and it leaves it in the Tax Code.

My amendment is simple. A few weeks ago this body agreed that we would phase out the production tax credit. The best way to do that is to remove that part from the Tax Code in year 2020 and then it would be eliminated and would actually go away.

Why would I encourage that? I would encourage that for several reasons. It

provides certainty in the industry. Several individuals I talked to in the industry say they need certainty in their planning. This would help with certainty in planning. It is assumed right now that it goes away in 2020. I would like to make sure everyone understands it really does go away in 2020. It is eliminated from the Tax Code. This is keeping everyone honest based on what they said they wanted to do, and we actually eliminate that production tax credit that year. It provides that great certainty that industry needs to know for their own planning, for their investment, and for outside capital resources and how that money comes in. It is also because these extensions are extremely costly.

The extension that was just done in December by this Congress will cost \$17 billion over the window—\$17 billion. May I remind everyone that we just had an extended argument over how we were going to fund the Transportation bill last year when we needed to find \$13 billion a year to fund transportation, and we just did a production tax credit for wind that is \$17 billion.

If we are going to deal with a lot of our national priorities, I am great with having wind in our portfolio, but this is not a new industry that continues to need support and provide the clarity that is needed to make sure we actually end this tax credit when we said we were going to end this tax credit. Let's remove it from the Tax Code in 2020 and make sure it goes away, and the only way it can be renewed at that point is to go through the normal tax process, create a new tax, and actually do it in the full sunlight rather than just say: Well, we are going to do another tiny extension again.

Wind has increased generation dramatically over the past 24 years, and I am glad. It is a good source. In our Nation, since 1992, wind generation has increased 3,000 percent. It is well developed, it is economically stable, it is pulling its own weight in the system, and we should allow it to continue to fly on its own. It is not as if wind goes away if we don't provide a tax credit.

It is interesting to note that in 2014 we faced something very similar to this. In 2014 it was one of those years that the tax credit was to go away and not exist anymore. It had expired. The problem was that at the very end of 2014, Congress did a retroactive renewal of the production tax credit for the year 2014 in the last days of December. So the whole year had gone by without the tax credit, and during the very last days of 2014 Congress once again renewed the production tax credit and did it retroactively. That year, 2014, the wind association noted that there was \$12 billion of private investment into wind that year. The tax credit was only applied in the final days.

Wind is a good energy source, but it does not need additional Federal dollars to be able to compete in this market. We have made that decision. Now it is time that we actually both trust

and verify and that we reach out to this last year, when we said as a body that wind energy would not get a production tax credit anymore, and remove it from the tax credit and verify for ourselves that, no, it is not going to happen.

One last thing. I came into this body 5 years ago and served in the House of Representatives. For the 4 years I served in the House of Representatives, I distinctly remember the first year, in 2011, when I sat down with some folks from wind energy and I asked: How much more time do you need for the production tax credit because wind continues to increase its efficiency. They said: It is becoming much more efficient. If we had 3 more years, we could make it. Again, this was in 2011. The discussion was that by doing a phasedown in 2011 they would need just 3 more years and it would go away.

In 2014 I was in a hearing in the House of Representatives, and I asked those same individuals: How much more time do you need for a phasedown and phaseout of the production tax credit? The same person said to me: If I just had 4 more years, we could phase this out. I am concerned, and I believe rightfully so, that in 2019 this body will have lobbyists come into it and say: If we just have a few more years of the PTC extension, we could make it just fine. I would argue they are doing very well as an industry—and I am glad they are. Let's make it clear the PTC ends in 2020 and does not return.

With that, I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for no more than 7 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS MATTHEW MCCLINTOCK

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I rise with sorrow and regret to pay tribute to SFC Matthew McClintock. Sergeant McClintock was a native of my home State of New Mexico. He died on January 5 in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, from injuries sustained from small arms fire. He was only 30 years old.

In answering the call to serve—a call he answered fearlessly multiple times—Sergeant McClintock's brief time on this Earth ended far too soon. It is difficult to imagine the grief his family and friends are feeling, but I just want to say to them that the memory of this American hero among those whose lives he touched, among those whose lives he tried to protect, and in a nation's gratitude, his memory will always endure.

Sergeant McClintock served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He joined the Army in 2006 as an infantryman and was assigned to the First Calvary Division in

Iraq. He began Army Special Forces training in 2009 and was assigned to the First Special Forces Group. He was deployed to Afghanistan in 2012. He left Active Duty in 2014 and was later assigned to Alpha Company, First Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group of the Washington Army National Guard and was again deployed with his unit to Afghanistan in July of last year. That is the official record, but it does not begin to tell us the day-to-day risks, hardships, and challenges Sergeant McClintock and his fellow soldiers encountered and the remarkable bravery and determination they gave in return.

Our Nation has the finest military on Earth because of the dedication and true grit of Americans like Matthew McClintock. Words cannot take away the pain of those who grieve for Sergeant McClintock. Words cannot fully express the gratitude our Nation owes to this valiant soldier. We can only remember—and must always remember—the sacrifice that SFC Matthew McClintock made in service to our country.

We should not forget or take for granted that our men and women in uniform continue to defend our Nation every day. They put their own safety at risk to protect the safety of others. They stand watch in faraway lands always at the ready.

Today we remember and we grieve that some of them, like Sergeant McClintock, tragically do not come home. His watch is over, but his fellow soldiers and his family now stand it in his place.

President Kennedy said that “stories of past courage . . . can teach, they can offer hope, they can provide inspiration. But, they cannot supply courage itself. For this, each man must look into his own soul.”

In the face of great danger and great risk to himself, Matthew McClintock went where his country sent him, time and again, and he served with honor and distinction. I am inspired by his courage and the heroic actions of others like him.

MG Bret Daugherty, the commander of the National Guard, spoke for all us when he said:

Staff Sergeant McClintock was one of the best of the best. He was a Green Beret who sacrificed time away from his loved ones to train for and carry out these dangerous missions. This is a tough loss . . . and a harsh reminder that ensuring freedom is not free.

Sergeant McClintock leaves behind a wife, Alexandra, and a young son, Declan. I hope they will find some comfort now and in the years ahead in Sergeant McClintock's great heart and great courage. He was truly a hero. He loved his country, and he made the ultimate sacrifice defending it.

To his family, please know that we honor Sergeant McClintock's service, we remember his sacrifice, and we mourn your loss.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2012, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2012) to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Murkowski amendment No. 2953, in the nature of a substitute.

Murkowski (for Cassidy/Markey) amendment No. 2954 (to amendment No. 2953), to provide for certain increases in, and limitations on, the drawdown and sales of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Murkowski amendment No. 2963 (to amendment No. 2953), to modify a provision relating to bulk-power system reliability impact statements.

BUILDING CONSENSUS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, yesterday the Speaker of the House and the majority leader met at the White House with President Obama. This meeting was the first time that these three leaders sat down together to discuss the Nation's business since the beginning of the new year and to look for some opportunities to advance bipartisan priorities during President Obama's final year in office.

This Senator knows that some might view such a meeting with skepticism and say: What incentive do people have to actually work together when they come from such polar opposite points of view politically and ideologically? But this Senator believes there is an opportunity to build on some of our success that we had in the Senate last year.

While many eyes are focused on Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Nevada, I want to assure my constituents and anybody else who happens to be listening, that we actually have been trying to get the people's work done here in the U.S. Congress. Some people might not want to hear that, some might not believe it when they hear it, but I would hope that fair-minded people might look at the evidence and say: Yes, there is actually some important work being done.

In the process, in 2015, we actually—I know this sounds improbable—reduced the role of the Federal Government in education and sent more of